

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES

September 16, 2010 City Hall, Rm 209, 6:30 p.m.
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Members Present:

Jane Brown
Jini Fairley
Rob Caruso, Co-Chair
Lucie Chansky
Rosemary Larking
Barbara Lischinsky
Girard Plante, Co-Chair

Staff Present:

Kathleen Cahill, Community Development Senior Planner
Robert Muollo, Housing Development Planner

Public Present:

Barbara Chandler
Ben Kief

G. Plante, Co-chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Barbara Chandler provided some background on the Fair Housing Committee's effort to evaluate the City's ability to meet accessibility compliance by hiring Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership to complete a city-wide system analysis. Ms. Chandler is in the process of interviewing department heads, citizen committees, and housing providers. She will be completing a report summarizing her findings and issuing recommendations.

Ms. Chandler asked the Committee questions about their experience and training. Several members indicated that they had received training on the ADA, Section 504, and the Fair Housing Act.

The Committee believes that some of the housing units designated and marketed as accessible are not truly accessible. The Committee attributes this to discrimination on the part of housing providers and a lack of enforcement on the part of the City. Several members have experienced discrimination when seeking a rental situation. They believe this is due in large part to a lack of education.

There was a discussion about the Committee's transition to a Commission. The Committee believes that becoming a Commission will enable them to increase their educational efforts throughout the City. Mayor Warren has been supportive of this transition. The Mayor is waiting to docket this action with the Board of Aldermen in order to obtain more information about parking violation funds. The Committee

would also like to be part of the update of the ADA Transition Plan and take the lead in investigating and responding to discrimination complaints, which are now heard by the Human Rights Commission.

The Committee would like to see an attitudinal shift in the Newton Housing Authority and more education on accessibility to this entity. They also believe that additional education is necessary for Inspectional Service Department staff. Members believe that the Committee should be at the forefront of the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen's agenda. The Committee would like to have additional staff capacity and a half-time ADA Coordinator (at least).

One member of the Committee stated that the City does an excellent job of meeting the needs of those with intellectual disabilities, including the provision of housing.

Ms. Chandler thanked the Committee for their time and invited them to attend a public forum on accessibility at Druker Auditorium on October 4, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. She requested that the Committee spread the word about the forum.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.